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General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

Official Records

93rd plenary meeting
Friday, 18 December 1998, 8 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jemat (Brunei Darussalam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 8.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Note by the Secretary-General (A/53/701)

The Acting President: May I take it that the General Assembly decides that the International Organization of la Francophonie will participate, in the capacity of observer, in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and of its subsidiary organs, instead of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation, which had been invited to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and of its subsidiary organs in the capacity of observer by General Assembly resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 20 and 45 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(c) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Draft resolution (A/53/L.66)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/753)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.66, which is in two parts. Part A is entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", and Part B is entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan".

I should like to announce that since the introduction of draft resolution A/53/L.66, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Fiji, Honduras, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/53/L.66 is contained in document A/53/753.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.66?

Draft resolution A/53/L.66 was adopted (resolutions 53/203 A and B).

98-86734 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (c) of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Moreover, the General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 45.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee an agenda items 17 (k), 111, 112, 114, 116 to 121, 123, 135, 137, 143 (a) and 113.

I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Tammam Sulaiman of the Syrian Arab Republic, to introduce the reports of the Fifth Committee in one intervention.

Mr. Sulaiman (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the honour today to present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items allocated to it. Members will recall that 37 items were allocated for consideration by the Fifth Committee. The Committee considered 24 items during the main part of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. The remaining items allocated to the Committee will be considered during the resumed fifty-third session.

From 5 October to 15 December 1998, the Fifth Committee held 45 meetings. Moreover, negotiations were carried out in the course of numerous informal consultations. I shall today give a brief report on the results of the work of the Fifth Committee.

Let me recall first of all that the Fifth Committee has already submitted reports under a number of items that were considered in October and November, including the following. Under agenda item 112, "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", the Committee has reported on administrative arrangements for the International Trade Centre, on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), on the World Trade Organization, on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities, and on the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on its activities during the fifty-second session. Under agenda item 113, "Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999", the Committee has reported on the programme budget implications of the special session of the Committee on Contributions in 1999 and on the savings achieved from the ninth session of UNCTAD, as well as on the programme budget implications of draft resolution I recommended by the Third Committee in its report contained in document A/53/623, entitled "International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination", and of draft resolution A/53/L.20 on the situation in Central America, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala".

Under agenda item 118, "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations", requests for exemption to Article 19 have been made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq and Tajikistan.

Other agenda items mainly relate to peacekeeping operations, such as agenda item 125, "Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara"; agenda item 136, "Financing of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan"; item 140, "Financing of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force"; and the support account for peacekeeping operations under agenda item 143, "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations".

I shall now present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee on the items considered during the last weeks of its session.

Regarding agenda item 17 (k), entitled "Appointment of a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/752. In paragraph 5 of that report, the Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the appointment of Mr. Kenshiro Akimoto to fill the unexpired portion of the term of office of a member who has resigned. Mr. Akimoto's nomination was made in the Committee by acclamation.

In relation to agenda item 111, entitled "Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/53/738. In paragraph 9 of the report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Fifth Committee adopted without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 112, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/53/521/Add.1. In paragraph 12 the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2000-2001, and the adoption of two draft decisions, which concern, respectively, the action taken on certain agenda items and relevant reports of the Committee and the biennial programme of work for the Fifth Committee. The draft resolution and the two draft decisions were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 113, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/485/Add.1. Under this agenda item, the Committee adopted two draft resolutions — draft resolution I, which deals with questions relating to the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, and draft resolution II, dealing with the programme budget for the biennium for the period 1998-1999. I wish to inform the Assembly that A/C.5/53/L.27 will be amended to reflect the actual work of the Committee. In addition, the seventh part of the first draft resolution concerning the programme on administrative information will be replaced with the text contained in A/C.5/53/L.32, which shows the consensus reached in the informal consultations on the integrated information system. This text was issued in A/C.5/53/L.27 and adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Turning to agenda item 114, entitled "Programme planning", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/743. In paragraph 8 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 116, entitled "Administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/53/713. In paragraph 5 of that report, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the budgetary and financial situation of organizations of the United Nations system and the relevant paragraphs of the first report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The draft decision was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Under agenda item 117, entitled "Pattern of conferences", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/744. In paragraph 7 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Regarding agenda item 118, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/53/464/Add.3. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Turning to agenda item 119, entitled "Human resources management", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/748. In paragraph 9 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft decision, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 120, entitled "United Nations common system", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/754. In paragraph 7 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Turning to agenda item 121, entitled "United Nations pension system", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/53/736. In paragraph 8 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Regarding agenda item 123, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/745. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Under agenda item 135, entitled "Financing of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/53/755. In

paragraph 6 of the report the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all the members of the Fifth Committee who contributed to the successful conclusion of this part of our work and to all the members of the Secretariat for the valuable assistance they provided to facilitate our work.

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote or position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(k) Appointment of a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/752)

The Acting President: In paragraph 5 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly should appoint Mr. Kenshiro Akimoto as a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee for the remainder of a term of office beginning on 1 January 1999 and ending on 31 December 2000.

May I take it that the General Assembly appoints that person?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 17.

Agenda item 111

Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/738)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/204).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 111.

Agenda item 112 (*continued*)

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/521/Add.1)

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolutions contained in paragraph 18 of the Committee's report. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Shearouse (United States of America): The United States cannot join the agreement reached on the $2.545 billion budget outlined for the biennium 2000-2001. We do not accept a budget outline level that is both greater than the current budget level and much more than is necessary to carry out all mandated programmes efficiently and effectively. It is our belief that an outline level equal to or lower than the current budget would have enabled full implementation of mandated activities, including real increases in several priority areas; reflected the likelihood of at least $20 million in efficiency savings in the next biennium as a result of improvements in efficiencies in United Nations operations; and provided resources for the special political missions that may be undertaken during the course of the budget period.

Despite clear indications that a budget less than the current level would be sufficient for the next biennium, the proposed resolution endorses an outline level that substantially exceeds this. Actual spending for the first year of the current biennium was well below the approved budget level. To increase the projected expenditure level above the current approved level, which itself exceeds the actual spending pattern, is simply irresponsible.

We also cannot agree to a budget outline that rejects the Secretary-General's proposal to achieve $20 million in savings through efficiency gains — a tiny amount when compared with the overall budget total. This capricious approach goes against Article 97 of the United Nations Charter, which gives the Secretary-General responsibility for administering the Organization in the most efficient and effective ways possible.

In truth, any budget totalling $2.5 billion would easily contain substantially more than $20 million in savings opportunities. The original proposal would have made such savings a distinct part of the budget proposal. While this approach was not embraced, we fully expect the Secretary-General to identify efficiency savings when proposing his budget for the biennium 2000-2001.

Approving a higher budget outline level than is justified on technical and programmatic grounds has set an unfortunate precedent. Given this situation, one can only conclude that there are other forces at play that gave rise to such an extraordinary and expensive action.

We would only add that we look forward to reviewing the Secretary-General's detailed budget estimates next year. These estimates should fully reflect the benefits of the reform and efficiency measures while also providing a realistic perspective on the United Nations resource requirements for the biennium.

Mr. Watanabe (Japan): Just for the record, my delegation would like to state the following concerning draft resolution II. The Government of Japan cannot accept the figure of $2.545 billion outlined for the biennium 2000-2001 because of the reasons stated in the Fifth Committee this afternoon. However, my delegation will not block the adoption without a vote of the draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 18 of its report (A/53/521/Add.1) and on the six draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 19 of the same report.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Results-based budgeting", which the Fifth Committee adopted without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 53/205).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2000-2001", which, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/53/L.33. The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution II without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 53/206).

The Acting President: We will now turn to the six draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 19 of its report (A/53/521/Add.1).

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision I, entitled "Revolving credit fund", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision II, entitled "Administrative arrangements for the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft decision II was adopted.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision III, entitled "Guidelines for Internal Control Standards", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft decision III was adopted.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision IV, entitled "Impact of the implementation of pilot projects on budgetary practices and procedures", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision IV was adopted.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision V, entitled "Biennial programme of work of the Fifth Committee for 1999-2000", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft decision V was adopted.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision VI, entitled "Items for consideration by the Fifth Committee during the resumed fifty-third session of the General Assembly", without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft decision VI was adopted.

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolutions just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): This brief explanation of position on the resolution on results-based budgeting is being delivered on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In addition, the delegations of the following countries have asked to be associated with it: the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu — in all, 10 Member States.

Our delegations have joined in the consensus on the resolution on results-based budgeting in support of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Secretary-General should provide additional prototype budget fascicles in a results-based budgeting format. We believe that, in order for the General Assembly to have more technical information at hand when considering this matter next year, paragraph 7 of the resolution is essential.

Our delegations also agreed with the wish of other delegations that the Secretary-General should provide additional justification for his recommendation to move to results-based budgeting. However, our delegations retain some concern that many of the paragraphs in this resolution seem to prejudge the outcome of the comparative analysis that the General Assembly is requesting of the Secretary-General.

It is our delegations' hope that, when the General Assembly takes up this matter again at its fifty-fourth session, the receipt of additional information requested will foster a well-informed and constructive discussion on results-based budgeting. This discussion should be based on technical aspects, but, at the same time, it affects the future health of this Organization.

Our delegations would be grateful if the Secretary-General would note that, while there is understandable uncertainty on the part of some delegations concerning his recommendation in the United Nations reform programme on results-based budgeting, there is also firm and unwavering support for the concept on the part of many delegations. We reiterate here the utmost importance that our delegations attach to the proper consideration of results-based budgeting in the United Nations.

Like other Member States, we seek a more credible United Nations. We fear that, if the United Nations management and administrative machinery is not modernized and strengthened, this Organization runs a serious risk of being unable to respond to the growing needs of the international community in the new century. If that were to be the case, all Member States would suffer, particular developing countries and small States. My own country is obviously in that category. We are the ones that rely most on the United Nations.

Therefore, our delegations will continue to support the gradual transition to a results-based budgeting system for the United Nations, for it is in this system that the seeds of a much more effective Organization can be found.

Mr. Schlesinger (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The General Assembly adopted resolution 41/213 because it wished to improve the financial and administrative functioning of the Organization and to facilitate the agreement among Member States on the programme budget. The concept of a budget outline was introduced and has since been a pillar of the budgetary process. It is for this reason that we attach great importance to it. The European Union was therefore pleased to join consensus on the present resolution after much work and welcome flexibility on the part of many delegations to reach the broadest possible agreement.

This is not to say that we were fully satisfied with all elements of the text. In particular, like others, we would have preferred to have retained in the outline the $20 million which the Secretary-General expects to be able to save through economies achieved by intense scrutiny of the programme budget. It is our view that this is by no means an unreasonable target for such economies in a budget of this size and we trust that the Secretary-General will continue to apply such scrutiny when preparing the budget he will propose next year. Of course, it goes without saying that such economies should be sought only in the context of full and effective financing for the implementation of mandated programmes and activities.

We welcome the resolution we have just adopted, which reaffirms General Assembly resolution 41/213. It effectively reverses calls for deviations made in the past for political reasons. In this context, we are particularly pleased to see the reaffirmation that a contingency fund in the amount of 0.75 per cent is additional to the overall budget figure, as specified in resolution 41/213. We also appreciate that the budget outline now contains a provision for special missions, as recommended by the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee.

The European Union has long agreed with the view of the Secretary-General that previous arrangements in this regard were an unsatisfactory basis for organizing the future management of resources for such missions.

It is unfortunate that some delegations remain unhappy with this resolution, which was adopted without a vote. But we expect that the procedures stipulated in resolution 41/213 and the spirit of consensus underpinning it will continue to guide our work when we come to discuss the Secretary-General's budget proposal, for which this resolution provides an indicative planning estimate.

Ms. Buergo Rodríguez (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation joined the consensus on resolution 53/206 on the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2000-2001, which we have just adopted.

However, my delegation would like to make a few brief comments, particularly in connection with some concerns expressed by my delegation during the informal consultations, which, in the interest of consensus, we did not press.

First of all, we would like to reaffirm that the budget outline is a preliminary estimate of resources, and is in no way a budget ceiling. Furthermore, we note the inclusion in the total amount approved of an amount relating to special political missions, which in our opinion departs from the provisions established in resolution 41/213. That issue will have to be considered very carefully in the future.

Finally, my delegation is concerned about the trend towards a diminution of the resources of the Organization and the increasing difficulty of ensuring sufficient resources to allow for the complete and proper implementation of all the mandates, activities and programmes in the medium-term plan. In this context, my delegation hopes that during negotiations next session under the item on the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, the General Assembly will be able to ensure and approve the amount of resources really necessary to implement all of the mandated activities and programmes of the Organization.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): I am pleased to join the hard-working Fifth Committee experts at this important plenary meeting. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Canada, New Zealand and Australia in explanation of position following the adoption of the draft resolution, contained in the Fifth Committee's report, on the proposed budget outline for the biennium 2000-2001.

The adoption of an outline for the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 represents an important first stage in the budgetary process. It sets the parameters within which the Secretary-General will prepare his budget proposals for the next biennium. In providing an indicative level of the next budget, it can be a critical planning tool for Member States. We are pleased that, for the first time, the outline includes a provision for special political missions. This will ensure a reliable funding base for these important activities and reduce the extent to which Member States could face unforeseen expenditures during the biennium. This, we believe, is a significant enhancement of the budgetary process.

Our three delegations are disappointed, however, that the outline does not take into account the efficiencies of $20 million proposed by the Secretary-General. We considered the amount of $20 million to be modest in a budget of more than $2.5 billion. Nevertheless, it is our understanding that the Secretary-General will pursue gains in productivity in the preparation of the next budget and subsequently in its implementation. We look forward to the results of that effort.

A key element of the outline is the preliminary estimate of the resource requirements for the next biennium. We note that the figure contained in resolution 53/206 is higher than the current level of appropriations and — I want to emphasize this — higher than our delegations consider to be financially prudent, particularly given the financial climate in some parts of the world. We recognize that agreement on the estimate was reached after sensitive and difficult negotiations, which entailed significant concessions from many delegations. However, the fact that the preliminary estimate was too high to be endorsed by the United States and Japan is a source of serious concern for our delegations. We believe that the very legitimate concerns of those two Member States, which together contribute 45 per cent of the total resources of this Organization, need to be addressed. We believe it important for this to be done in the context of next year's negotiations on the programme budget for 2000-2001 and, for our part, we are prepared to work to help bring that about.

Our delegations remain strongly committed to strengthening the effectiveness and the work of the United Nations. We view fiscal restraint and the focused use of resources as essential elements in the broader reform process. We trust that, in preparing the budget based on the outline adopted today, the Secretary-General will consolidate his reforms and continue to work actively and energetically to streamline processes and structures to allow more resources to be invested in substantive programmes.

Mr. Jaremczuk (Poland): My delegation wishes to inform the Assembly that we have decided to align ourselves with the statement made earlier by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote. We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 112.

Agenda item 114

Programme planning

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/743)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/207).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 114.

Agenda item 116

Administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/713)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of its report.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 116?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 117

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/744)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/208).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 117.

Agenda item 118 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/464/Add.3)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolutions 53/36 B to E).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — align themselves with this statement.

First, I would like to thank the representative of Ireland, Mr. Frank Smyth, for his outstanding work as coordinator of this resolution.

The European Union is pleased that we have adopted by consensus resolutions 53/36 B to E, dealing with the report of the Committee on Contributions, whose good work is rightly acknowledged. There remains, however, much more to be done in pursuit of the European Union's long-held objective of making the system of financing our Organization both more transparent and more equitable.

It is right that the Committee on Contributions should be instructed to look at ways in which the application of Article 19 might be tightened. By this we mean that the effective arrears period should be brought into line with the original intent of those who drafted this Article. Member States should risk the sanction of the loss of their vote in the General Assembly if they are in default of their obligations after a real two-year period, not the almost three years that presently applies.

It is for this reason that we would like to see the Committee on Contributions give specific advice on the impact of doing the calculation twice a year rather than just once, in early January, as is currently the case. We also believe that it should look closely at the consequences of using net rather than gross figures in the calculation.

The European Union continues to believe that it is fundamentally unacceptable that so many Member States should make a habit of systematically being in arrears. Too many deliberately pay at the last possible moment; some make no payments at all. In such circumstances, we look to the Committee on Contributions for advice on what measures might be imposed to serve as a real disincentive to such poor performance.

I have already recalled that it has long been an important objective of the European Union to make the scales of assessment more equitable. In this context, we regret that we were once again prevented from even discussing our proposals to bring a more rational system to bear on the financing of peacekeeping operations. We believe that the technical advice of the Committee on Contributions would be valuable in this area and find it unacceptable that a straightforward request for the Committee's help should effectively be blocked by one group of Member States.

Under the current system for financing United Nations peacekeeping operations, group D countries receive a 90 per cent discount and group C countries a discount of 80 per cent. It is not this particular system which itself gives us great cause for concern at this stage. Indeed, we want to discuss how it might be improved. Rather, we are concerned by the fact that too many countries continue to receive an 80 per cent discount as a result of a calculation of their relative share of world gross national product in 1973, some 25 years ago. We believe that it is unacceptable that some of these countries continue to gain an unwarranted subsidy at the expense not only of those that pay fully and promptly, but also of those countries that — were there to be a change to the group system — would deservedly benefit from it.

In the parliaments of the countries of the European Union, this situation is increasingly being questioned. It is not something that should be allowed to continue. Moreover, we are not prepared to accept that we are denied an opportunity to discuss the problem. We reserve the right to return to this issue at the resumed fifty-third session, under agenda item 143, "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations".

Mr. Atiyanto (Indonesia): Allow me to state the following on behalf of my colleagues members of the Group of 77 and China.

The Group of 77 and China joined the consensus on the adoption of this resolution, but not without great disappointment. We are very much concerned about the spirit under which this resolution was negotiated. Therefore, we are of the view that any mistrust and doubt should be avoided. Furthermore, we continue to hold our long-standing view that it is irrelevant to link the discussion of this agenda item with the special scale for the peacekeeping operations budget.

We are also of the view that the Committee on Contributions does not have the mandate to discuss the special scale for the peacekeeping operations budget. This is particularly true in the light of the observation contained in paragraph 93 of the report of the Committee on Contributions (A/53/11), and as referred to and explained by the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions during the negotiations in the informal consultations. Therefore, we are strongly against any attempt to include the provision concerning the scale of assessments for peacekeeping budgets in this resolution.

We would also like to say that the Group of 77 and China will continue to be vigilant in its principled position, as guided by the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the twenty-second annual meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 118.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Human resources management

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/748)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 119.

Agenda item 120

United Nations common system

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/754)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/209).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 120.

Agenda item 121

United Nations pension system

Reports of the Fifth Committee (A/53/736, A/53/737)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report (A/53/736). The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is contained in document A/53/737.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/210).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 121.

Agenda item 123

Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/745)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola" without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/211).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 123.

Agenda item 135

Financing of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/755)

The Acting President: The Assembly will take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/53/755).

The draft resolution was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly too wishes to adopt the draft resolution?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/212).

The Acting President: Before calling on the representative who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, let me remind representatives that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats. I call on the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Orlov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): In the light of the need for a swift decision on the financing of the Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the delegation of the Russian Federation joined the consensus on this resolution. However, with respect to paragraph 5, which relates to a recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the convening of a group of independent experts to evaluate the operations of the Tribunal, the Russian delegation continues to have serious doubts about the need for such a group and about its mandate. In our view, the mandate of the group of experts should not go beyond administrative and budgetary issues. The work of that group must not infringe on areas that lie exclusively within the competence of the Security Council. We are firmly convinced that only the Security Council, which established the Tribunal, has the right to evaluate its operations from the political or legal standpoint and to carry out effective monitoring of its functioning.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 135.

Agenda item 137

Financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/756)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Uganda on a point of order.

Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo (Uganda): I wish to make a correction to paragraph 5 of the draft resolution recommended in paragraph 6 of the report of the Fifth Committee. The reference to "paragraph 3 above" should be changed to "paragraph 4 above".

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended in paragraph 6 of the report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/756), as orally corrected. The draft resolution was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly too wishes to adopt the draft resolution, as orally corrected?

The draft resolution, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 53/213).

The Acting President: Before calling on representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, let me remind members that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Orlov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): In the light of the need for a swift decision on the financing of the Tribunal for Rwanda, the delegation of the Russian Federation joined the consensus on this resolution. However, with respect to paragraph 4, which relates to a recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the convening of a group of independent experts to evaluate the operations of the Tribunal, the Russian delegation continues to have serious doubts about the need for such a group and about its mandate. In our view, the mandate of the group of experts should not go beyond

administrative and budgetary issues. The work of that group must not infringe on areas that lie exclusively within the competence of the Security Council. We are firmly convinced that only the Security Council, which established the Tribunal, has the right to evaluate its operations from the political or legal standpoint and to carry out effective monitoring of its functioning.

Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo (Uganda): I wish to thank the representative of New Zealand, who did a wonderful job of coordinating the item on which the Assembly has just taken a decision. My delegation has a particular interest in this item and would therefore like to make some brief comments. We are particularly happy to note that the General Assembly has taken the decision to establish an expert group to evaluate the operation and functioning of the Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia. It is the view of my delegation that the expert group will be able to assess the effectiveness of the Tribunals and the way in which they have been functioning since their establishment. We hope that its report will be useful in helping all the concerned organs of the United Nations as they try to take the steps necessary to improve the effective functioning of the Tribunals.

We are also happy to note that the resolution we have just adopted takes note that efforts are being made by the Office of Human Resources Management to review the current remuneration package applicable to staff of the Tribunal. We hope that this will go a long way towards encouraging more staff to work in the Tribunal and to fill the vacancies there, which we have noted are very high.

Finally, allow me to say that aspersions have been cast as to the appreciation extended to the management of the Tribunal on the functioning of the Tribunal in Arusha. Those of us who are quite close to the Tribunal and who have been following its development believe that many efforts have been made to try to put it on a proper footing, and although not all is totally perfect, we believe that the efforts made to date should be appreciated. We are very pleased that the Committee and the General Assembly have recognized this effort, and we want to send a clear message to the management of the Tribunal that it should continue its work and strive harder to make the Tribunal more effective.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 137.

Agenda item 143 (*continued*)

Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/522/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 4 of its report. The title of the draft decision is as follows: "Death and disability benefits".

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 143.

Agenda item 113 (*continued*)

Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/485/Add.1)

The Acting President: I should like to inform delegations of a technical error concerning the symbol of the Committee's report under this item. The correct symbol of the report should read A/53/485/Add.1, not A/53/757. The final version of the report will be corrected accordingly.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft resolutions and the three draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in its report, which, for the time being, are contained in section IV, paragraphs 43 and 44, of document A/C.5/53/L.27.

We turn first to draft resolution I, entitled "Questions relating to the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999".

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 53/214).

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution II, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 53/215 A to C).

The Acting President: We next turn to the three draft decisions.

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision I, entitled "Financial arrangements associated with the dining room at the International Court of Justice", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision II, entitled "Relationship between the treatment of perennial activities in the programme budget and the use of the contingency fund", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision III, entitled "Development Account", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 113.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Fifth Committee before it.

Programme of work

The Acting President: With regard to the programme of work of the General Assembly, apart from organizational matters and items that may have to be considered by operation of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, and bearing in mind the action already taken by the Assembly thus far, I should like to propose that the following agenda items remain for consideration during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly: agenda items 10, 11, 16, 17, 20, 30, 31, 38 to 40, 43 to 45, 57 to 62, 93 (f), 94 (c), 108, 111 to 115, 117 to 145, 152, 155, 161, 163, 165 and 167.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly that those agenda items remain for consideration during the fifty-third session of the Assembly?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like also to inform members that the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council will meet next year from 8 to 19 February.

Finally, before adjourning the meeting I should like to wish all delegations happy holidays, and to our Muslim colleagues a most successful Ramadan.

The meeting rose at 9.25 p.m.